

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 PM-05 NSC-05 CIAE-00 INR-10
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FM AMCONSUL MUNICH
TO AMEMBASSY SOFIA
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 0618
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AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MUNICH 03357

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, BU
SUBJECT: BULGARIAN REFUGEE SHEDS NEW LIGHT ON ORIGINS
OF "DECLARATION '78"

REF: SOFIA 754 AND PREVIOUS

1. INTRO AND SUMMARY. THE CHIEF OF RFE'S BULGARIAN
SERVICE HAS RECEIVED A LETTER FROM IVAN IORDANOV BENKOV,
A RECENT REFUGEE FROM BULGARIA WHO CLAIMS TO HAVE BEEN
INVOLVED IN THE PREPARATION OF THE "DECLARATION '78"

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DOCUMENT WHICH WAS DISTRIBUTED TO SEVERAL EMBASSIES IN
SOFIA EARLIER THIS YEAR. BENKOV CLAIMS THAT THE
DECLARATION WAS THE PRODUCT OF APPROXIMATELY 70 PERSONS
WHO SOUGHT TO PROMOTE CIVIL RIGHTS IN BULGARIA. END
SUMMARY.

2. BENKOV'S LETTER INDICATES THE GROUP WHICH PREPARED

"DECLARATION '78" WAS HEADED BY ONE DIMO MARKOVSKI. MEMBERSHIP, WHICH TOTALLED ABOUT 70 PERSONS, INCLUDED JOURNALISTS, WRITERS AND STUDENTS. GOALS OF GROUP WERE TO PROMOTE CIVIL RIGHTS IN BULGARIA AND TO ASSIST POLITICAL PRISONERS.

3. BENKOV HAS INTERESTING EXPLANATION FOR INITIALS "ABD," WHICH APPEAR ON EACH OF THE "DECLARATION '78" COPIES CIRCULATED TO FOREIGN EMBASSIES IN SOFIA. HE SAYS THAT THE LEADERS OF THE GROUP WHICH PREPARED THE DECLARATION DECIDED NOT RPT NOT TO SIGN IT BUT RATHER TO USE THESE INITIALS WHICH ACTUALLY HAVE NO RPT NO MEANING.

4. BENKOV CLAIMS TO HAVE CARRIED THE ORIGINAL DECLARATION TO THE WEST WHEN HE DEPARTED BULGARIA IN NOVEMBER 1977. HE ALSO REPORTS THAT "SVOBODEN NAROD," THE VIENNA-BASED ORGAN OF THE BULGARIAN SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IN EXILE, PUBLISHED AN OPEN LETTER ABOUT HIS ACTIVITIES IN BULGARIA IN ISSUE NO. 27-28, 1978.

5. INFORMATION CONTAINED IN BENKOV'S LETTER TO RFE BULGARIAN SERVICE CHIEF INDICATES THAT HE WAS BORN JUNE 12, 1934, IN PLEVEN AND LEFT BULGARIA ILLEGALLY IN NOVEMBER 1977. AFTER SPENDING SIX MONTHS IN A REFUGEE CAMP IN TRAIKIRCHEN, AUSTRIA, HE RECEIVED A CONFIDENTIAL

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U.S. VISA AND SETTLED IN NEW YORK CITY. BENKOV APPROACHED THE CHIEF OF RFE'S BULGARIAN SERVICE VIA A MR. PENTSCHKEFF OF RFE/RL'S NEW YORK OFFICE.

6. IN HIS LETTER TO THE BULGARIAN SERVICE CHIEF, BENKOV CLAIMS HE WAS EDUCATED AS A LAWYER AND BEGAN HIS PROFESSIONAL CAREER IN 1959 AS A STATE PROSECUTOR. IN 1963, HE TRANSFERRED TO THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AS AN EXAMINING MAGISTRATE, AND LATER BECAME THE CHIEF OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR CAPITAL CRIMES WITH THE RANK OF MAJOR. HE CLAIMS THAT HE QUIT THIS POST IN 1971 BECAUSE HE OPPOSED THE PRACTICE OF CHARACTERIZING CERTAIN CRIMES AS "POLITICALLY MOTIVATED." HE BECAME A SIMPLE LAWYER WITH THE AIM OF "RENDERING ASSISTANCE TO PEOPLE WHO ARE PERSECUTED IN VIOLATION OF THEIR BASIC CIVIL RIGHTS.

7. BENKOV CLAIMS FURTHER THAT HIS ATTEMPTS TO ASSIST PEOPLE WHO WERE DEPRIVED OF THEIR CIVIL RIGHTS BROUGHT HIM UNDER THE FIRE OF THE BULGARIAN COMMUNIST PARTY. THIS PRESSURE LED HIM TO RESIGN FROM THE PARTY IN WHAT HE CHARACTERIZES AS A "DRAMATIC MANNER." AT A MEETING OF THE PARTY MEMBERS OF THE SOFIA BAR, WHICH WAS HELD

ON JANUARY 20, 1975, BENKOV CLAIMS HE TOLD THE 200 DELEGATES PRESENT THAT HE WAS ASHAMED TO BE A PARTY MEMBER BECAUSE THE PARTY WAS PURSUING A COURSE AIMED AT THE LIQUIDATION OF THE BULGARIAN NATION. HE STATES THAT ONE OF THE POINTS ON THE AGENDA OF THE MEETING WAS A PROPOSAL FOR FURTHER INTEGRATING BULGARIA WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND POSSIBLY TRANSFORMING BULGARIA INTO THE 16TH REPUBLIC OF THE USSR BY 1981. BENKOV ALLEGES THAT HE WAS ARRESTED TWO WEEKS AFTER THIS MEETING.

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8. AFTER BEING HELD IN PRE-TRIAL CONFINEMENT FOR A LENGTHY TIME, BENKOV CLAIMS HE WAS SENTENCED TO THREE YEARS, TWO MONTHS IMPRISONMENT. AS A RESULT OF PROTESTS FROM HIS FORMER COLLEAGUES, HE CLAIMS TO HAVE BEEN FREED AND GIVEN A JOB AS A LEGAL CONSULTANT AT AN ENTERPRISE. APPARENTLY IT WAS DURING LATTER PERIOD THAT HE PURPORTEDLY PARTICIPATED IN ACTIVITIES OF GROUP WHICH

PREPARED "DECLARATION '78." GILMORE

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